

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Present were Chair, Joan Duff, members Jay Doherty, Eric Macaux and Lelani Loder; also present was Paul Materazzo, Director of Planning and Lisa Schwarz, Senior Planner.

Planning Session: (Franciscan Overlay District)

Mr. Materazzo updated the Board on the language of the proposed article, which is still being drafted, for a senior housing overlay district in the area of the former Franciscan Center on River Road. He stated that the Franciscan Overlay Task Board only wants to move forward with the article if the Planning Board is willing to cosponsor it, giving the article more weight at Town Meeting. The 1992 Master Plan and 2004 Community Development Plan identified this particular area of Town as a place to move forward with housing options for the aging population. The overlay would provide housing options for those over the age of 62 including independent housing, congregate housing, assisted living, and Alzheimer's facilities. The group would like the maximum number of units to be low, but for the project to remain attractive to a developer. The draft currently has a cap of 150 independent units and 300 beds, but these counts may need to almost be reversed in order for a developer to make money off of the project. There are no set dimensional requirements between units but reasonable setbacks from abutting properties, which leaves the design up to the developer to create a village or a community. The group has identified Edgewood in North Andover as a model of what should be emulated. Mr. Macaux asked if the Task Force has gotten input on unit counts from developers to see what is necessary to get an adequate return on these developments. Mr. Materazzo informed the Board that one member of the Task Force is on the Board of Directors at Edgewood and another member works for The Groves in Lincoln, so they have firsthand knowledge of what is needed. The development would allow for services and amenities on campus that are intended for use by the resident population. This overlay is an opportunity to obtain additional open space along the Merrimack River, requiring developers to dedicate at least 30% as protected open space. Ms. Schwarz addressed the Board about level of affordability. The draft calls for 10% of the units to be set aside as affordable. Ms. Schwarz would prefer language to be put into the article that gives the Planning Board the ability, during the Special Permit Process, in lieu of making some of the ownership units affordable, to put a calculated difference into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund for affordable housing purposes elsewhere. Finding people over a certain age that qualify to purchase these affordable units, especially on resale, has historically been very difficult, and there is only a limited amount of time to find a qualified buyer. Any money that comes in to the Housing Trust Fund could be designated to seniors and used for something like a senior rehab program to help keep people in their own homes. Mr. Doherty asked for an explanation of the "local preference" aspect. Ms. Schwarz informed the Board that typically 70% of the units are set aside for local preference. Mr. Doherty asked if the neighborhood is still in favor of and if public safety is okay with this. Ms. Schwarz answered that the neighborhood seems to be okay with it, some of the Task Force members live in the neighborhood, and many people would like to see the Franciscan Center building itself preserved. She also informed the Board that there has been no push back from public safety. The site is close to Lowell hospitals and typically in these communities there is usually some sort of satellite ambulance station on site and an agreement that is worked out with the developer. Ms. Duff asked if the Franciscan Center Building was designated historic. Ms. Schwarz answered that it was not a historic building. Ms. Duff has noted that she has heard from a number of people in Town that there is a

Franciscan Overlay (cont'd):

lack of options for people who wish to downsize but stay in Town. Mr. Doherty asked what the next steps would be. Ms. Schwarz informed them that the Task Force needs to finalize the language and then get that language to Town Counsel. Mr. Materazzo would also like to get some more feedback from the community.

Planning Session: (ID Amenities)

Ms. Schwarz reviewed the revised draft language of the proposed ID2 District for the North Section of River Road and the Dascomb Road areas that are currently designated as ID zoning. A definition of a grocery store has been proposed that establishes that more than 70% of the gross floor area has to be dedicated to the sale of food products for home preparation or consumption. This would help guarantee that a grocery store would be put in place, and not some other type of store that is trying to represent itself as a grocery store. The group is currently looking at retail sales establishment square footages and what types of uses are desired to be seen in these locations. It has been proposed that 25,000 s.f. is a good footprint, which is not big box, but allows for other types of uses. Retail stores such as a Pier 1 and Michael's Crafts are around this size. Mr. Doherty asked about the locations proposed, and Ms. Schwarz explained that the easiest areas to implement this zoning right now are the northern area of River Road, where companies have been asking for amenities for their employees, and the Dascomb Road area right off of Interstate 93. Mr. Doherty asked if because these areas are so different, should there be different allowable uses for each. There was a discussion on if the Board should only focus on one area at this time. Ms. Duff noted that right now, there is no way of really knowing who is interested in each area in order to determine what uses would be wanted. It would be a shame to lose out on prospective businesses because nothing is in place to allow for these potential. Ms. Schwarz suggested that the ID zones could be modified to include medical uses, and then the Dascomb Road area could be rezoned ID2 to be able to include the medical uses and restaurants, eliminating the retail aspect. Mr. Macaux stated that each proposed use has been carefully looked at to fit these areas at this time, and the differences between the two areas is a reason why both should be pursued now. It is great to see how two different areas would respond to the change. He would rather go in with smaller square footages and realize that either area could accommodate more, than to go in incrementally with only one area and then go back and explain the case for the other area. There is a demonstrated demand in the northern River Road area with people asking for the amenities, and there has already been interest expressed in developing Dascomb Road. Mr. Macaux offered that if the thresholds are on the lower end of around 20,000 s.f., then there can be better oversight. There is a discussion as to whether or not the phrase "in their discretion" will discourage developers if they wanted to propose something over the thresholds. Ms. Schwarz informed the Board that many developers will call her or Mr. Materazzo to discuss their potential plans before they buy parcels. The group discussed the potential to turn existing commercial buildings into indoor commercial recreation facilities, like an indoor soccer facility, what their average sizes are, and what area towns have these types of establishments. The group also discussed screening and setbacks from the road in the River Road area as well as how much of the developable land abuts Route 93 in both areas. Ms. Schwarz reiterated that the businesses in the River Road area have voiced their support of the rezoning during the Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Association roundtables that are held about every six months. Ms. Schwarz informed the Board that their next steps would be

ID Amenities (cont'd):

to vote on this at their next meeting, so if they had any more questions, they should get them to Mr. Materazzo.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.